

Columbia River Regional Forum
System Configuration Team Meeting
March 18, 2021
FINAL Notes

Representatives of Corps, WA, BPA, NOAA, and others participated in today's SCT meeting facilitated by Blane Bellerud, NOAA and chaired by Ian Chane, Corps. See the last page of these minutes for a list of attendees at today's meeting.

1. Presentation on PIT tag detection technology, Gabriel Brooks – NWFSC

Gabriel Brooks from NOAA presented on PIT tag detection technology. He covered two main topics:

1. Recent PIT-tag work
2. Upcoming BPA-funded PIT-tag research and development

Gabriel started by letting the group know that NOAA has just received the formal “go-ahead” from Silver Springs for the matrix antenna. Work will begin on April 15 and is scheduled to occur 7 days a week.

NOAA will be completing some flexible antenna cable array work this spring. This will start after the matrix season.

Gabriel shared that while barges have been used in the past to collect data, they will not be used this year. The first deployment was in 2018. It was a half-size prototype barge used for a feasibility study. NOAA was specifically looking at installation procedures as well as how difficult it would be to place the barge in the mainstem Columbia. They wondered if it would drift and they also wondered how much maintenance would be required. In 2019, it was re-deployed. It happened late due to a federal shutdown. During 2019, flows were stronger than in 2018. There were not many detections due to when the barge was deployed. However, there were improvements to the design and maintenance of the barge PIT-tag system. In 2020, additional improvements were made. These were tested in high velocity water during the season. Gabriel thinks with a full barge that detections will double.

Trevor Conder, NOAA, asked why the barge is not being used this year. Specifically, he wondered how that decision was made. Gabriel noted that it is not due to COVID, since NOAA was able to deploy this during COVID last year. The reason it is on hold this year is financial.

Trevor also asked about the avoidance issue that was observed with the barge. Noting that it might be sensible to complete an additional year of testing. Gabriel agreed, adding that the

barge in Walla Walla are not having the same avoidance issue and the only differences between the barges there and the barge below Bonneville are the mooring ball and the water velocity.

In response to a question from an SCT member, Gabe let SCT know that there were anchor issues. The barge started out with a 3,000 lb. anchor and did move during higher flows. The crew switched to a 6,000 lb. anchor and had no further issues.

Scott Bettin, BPA, asked about cost. The barge costs \$175k for 45 days however this should not be extracted into a monthly quote since the \$175k included improvements to the barge. Additionally, the monthly quote may be different from the 45-day quote.

Charles Morrill, WA, asked about replacing the pit trawl in the lower estuary with a series of barges. Gabe cannot speak to that but noted it brings up a lot of questions regarding cost, funding, and storage.

2. Budget & Project Updates

Ian Chane updated the group on both project updates and the FY21 budget. First, the budget remains largely unchanged. Secondly, Ian is not able to share the FY22 budget yet and it looks like the PBud may be delayed. As far as project updates, highlights of today's discussion include:

- Lower Granite Juvenile Bypass Facility – The Corps had planned a site stabilization contract for this year, however the AE will not have work done in time to get contract out door this fiscal year. This means there may be some carryover into next year.
- B2FGE: The Corps is experiencing some difficulties establishing the contract. Things are on track for now but the agency is up against some hard deadlines.

3. Strategic improvements to PIT detection infrastructure to restore and increase detection capabilities as necessary to evaluate inriver survival with the flexible spill program, Trevor Conder – NOAA Fisheries

The new high spill operation has resulted in less fish entering the bypass system, said Trevor. This makes it difficult to monitor survival at acceptable levels or with accuracy. The standard errors in the data are large. The proposed action includes language that says the Action Agencies will investigate juvenile fish survival and implement structural improvements. Specifically it notes this must be done near Bonneville dam. Trevor thinks SCT needs to discuss this ASAP. Trevor would also like to see the data on how survival now compares to survival under the previous spill agreements. He thinks it would be useful to collect data for future management decisions. Charles agreed this is a good idea. He also brought up that barges above the McNary outfall might help with detection. Trevor thinks this is a good idea, adding that it may be helpful to also look at putting it in different places.

Another SCT member asked if there have been discussions about increasing the number of tagged fish as opposed to increasing detections. The number of tagged fish has declined over the years, he noted. Trevor mentioned it is a potential but brought up there are some issues with it. Blane added that a study was completed a few years back that showed that the best was to increase detections was through increasing PIT-detection capabilities (as opposed to increasing tags). The group is looking into a cost estimate for a barge at McNary. Gabe will report back to SCT with what he finds.

Scott Bettin commented on an issue with the sluiceway gates at Bonneville 1. Design work is underway but there is a question about if the weight will be too much for the hoist. The Corps would need to participate in that analysis so as the budget is decided, it may be important to prioritize it, said Scott.

Charles is going to write up a few paragraphs about why the Little Goose proposal for north shore entrance is important. They are looking at installing a PIT system.

Today's Attendees:

Blane Bellerud, NOAA

Brad Eppard, Corps

Charles Morrill, WA

Ian Chane, Corps

Gabriel Brooks, NOAA

Marvin Shutters, Corps

Melissa Haskin, BPA (CONTR, Flux Resources LLC)

Scott Bettin, BPA

Tom Lorz, Umatilla/CRITFC

Trevor Conder, NOAA

*Minutes by Melissa Haskin, Flux Resources LLC, Contractor for Bonneville,
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